

Disaster Communications Primer for El Cerrito/Kensington CERT Trainees

Our Fire and Police perform an excellent job providing professional emergency service during everyday operations. However when a disaster strikes all professional emergency services will be overloaded. That is where CERT comes into play. Thank you all for your efforts and community spirit. You are irreplaceable.

One aspect that is often overlooked and difficult to train in, is disaster communications. Just imagine widespread and prolonged power and telephone outages, cell phone and internet unavailability. Yes, this happens in earthquakes, storms, fires, and other large disasters. How will you communicate with your search and rescue teams, your CERT area coordinator, with the Emergency Operations Center, shelters, or sharing resources, personnel, and mutual aid between neighboring areas? The most effective method is by radio.

CERT groups nationwide have effectively broken this down into three or four tiers. Our CERT main responsibility is, as always, to our immediate family and neighborhood. This is effected through neighborhood coordinators or block captains. They should take advantage of inexpensive FRS (Family Radio Service Radios) for search and rescue and related intra-neighborhood communications. **This is the first tier; i.e., intra-block communications.**

The second tier (inter-block) is to establish radio communications from and to the blocks/neighborhoods to the CERT Area Coordinator or AREA ICP (Incident Command Post); which may be located at your CERT area staging area or gathering point. This is done also by FRS radio, as aforementioned, to a more powerful GMRS/FRS radio operator located at the AREA Staging Area/ICP or nearby area communications center..

The third tier (inter-area) occurs at the AREA ICP/Staging Area communications center where the windshield surveys (damage assessment reports), reports of gas and water main breaks, downed live power lines, fires, and life threatening emergencies that can't be handled locally are sent in to the EOC (Emergency Operating Center) via **Ham Radio**. Also evacuation orders, shelter locations, and other relevant information directed back to the neighborhoods may emanate out of the EOC to be relayed to the blocks via the area communications center. Since disasters, such as earthquakes, do not hit each area equally, excess nurses, doctors, medical personnel, and numerous logistical supplies can be shared between CERT Areas across Kensington-El Cerrito via **Ham Radio**.

In summary, the Kensington Amateur Radio Operators – El Cerrito Ham Operators (KARO-ECHO) will offer free training and guidance in helping CERT trainees to obtain, maintain, and operate FRS and GMRS radios. KARO-ECHO will also provide information and training on how to become licensed amateur radio operators (hams); which will enhance our communications abilities. . Come join and help us help each other! Just think, when internet, cell phones, SMS texting, power, and telephone are down, or at best severely overloaded – go radio!

Please contact INFO@KAROECHO.NET Check WWW.KAROECHO.NET for FRS, GMRS, and Ham Radio Communications Training.

Your CERT block captains and CERT Area Coordinators need you.